

action in London. It is, at any rate, certain that the vast majority of their followers had no such designs. When they had got their charters of freedom, the majority went home. Loyalty to good King Eichard and death to his wicked counsellors began and ended their simple politics. Their watchword was 'With King Richard and the true Commons.' It was in the King's name that they were roused by the local agitators, it was the King's banner that they unfurled on Blackheath, it was the King whom they chose for leader when his servants had struck down Wat Tyler.¹ It is probable that there is some truth in what Froissart says of the rebels who marched on London, that full two-thirds of them knew not what they wanted, but followed each other in that spirit of ignorant faith in which the lower orders, three centuries back, had followed Peter the Hermit to the Holy Land.²

If the rebellion emphasised the want of popular reverence for the government and for the representatives, small and great, of the secular power, it emphasised no less the want of reverence for the recognised ecclesiastical authorities. We have already pointed out the decadence of the ideal of the Mediaeval Church, the weakening of the control exercised over laymen by penance, confession and obedience to the clergy. It is not therefore surprising to find that the rebels, though religious, were by no means attached to that mediaeval religion, which consisted largely in reverence for churchmen. It was reported that the leaders in London demanded, among their other revolutionary proposals, complete disendowment of the Church and the abolition of the hierarchy ; all tenants on monastic and clerical estates were to become peasant proprietors.³ No doubt, therefore, a strong leaven of anti-ecclesiastical feeling must have existed among many of the leaders, as it certainly did in the case of John Ball. It is safe to say that in the Rising the clergy were treated just as laymen. They were not promiscuously massacred, but a bad minister was to these men no less a bad minister because he

¹ Powell, 42, 45, 47, 53, 58, 137; Wals., i. 455, 458; Proiss., ii. 472

² H. R., 512-3; Froiss., ii. 462

³ H. R., 512, 519; Kriehn, 480-4; Wals., ii. 10.